Summary Overview of Ombudsman

Congress mandated the Ombudsman through the 1998 PBO legislation. The Ombudsman serves as the borrower's last resort for issue escalation and resolution. The Ombudsman is also responsible for acting as the principal advisor to the Chief Operating Officer by providing expert findings, advice, and recommendations on matters pertaining to SFA program development and operational effectiveness.

Primary Customer: Borrowers
Internal Partners: All SFA General Managers, Offices, and Contact Centers
External Partners: Schools, Lenders, Guaranty Agencies, Servicers, IRS, SSA, State Administrators, Legislators, Licensing Agencies, Accrediting Bodies, Congressional Office Representatives, Collection Agencies, Credit Bureaus

Operating Partner: NCS, Contact Center Operations
Contact Name: Debra Wiley
Ombudsman Phone: 1-877-557-2575 or 202-401-4498
Web Page: sfahelp.ed.gov

Services Offered:

Ombudsman
- Receive, review, and provide options to resolve complaints from loan - do not have authority for final resolution
- Serve as an impartial judge to mediate disputes internally without the need for outside arbitration
- Develop deep knowledge of business issues that face SFA borrowers and partners
- Gather information about business trends that impact SFA's ability to anticipate and address its customer's and partner's needs
- Review SFA's operations and recommend quality improvements
- Foster a cooperative network and open exchange of information with SFA internal and external SFA partners
- Store case information and use as a resource for resolving other cases
- Report annually on the activities and effectiveness of the Ombudsman
- Main categories of contacts:
    - General Inquiry
    - Research Inquiry
        - Account Balance
        - Bankruptcy
        - Closed School
        - Collection Practices
        - Consolidation
        - Default
        - Deferment/Forbearance
        - Loan Cancellation/Discharge
        - NSLDS
        - Repayment Plans/Amounts
        - Service Quality

- SFA Information
- Student Eligibility
- Tax Refund/Offset
- Wage Garnishment

For more detailed information on the Ombudsman contact center including hours of operation, phone numbers, fax, email, web sites, call volumes, and detailed process flows, please reference the CIC Operating Model.

Ombudsman Process Flow Narrative:

The Ombudsman phone number is published on reference materials and regulations state the phone number and address must be included on billing notices and letters to the borrowers. In addition, Financial Aid Administrators give the Ombudsman phone number to borrowers. The above contact points result in the Ombudsman receiving general inquiries and correspondence better suited for other SFA offices.
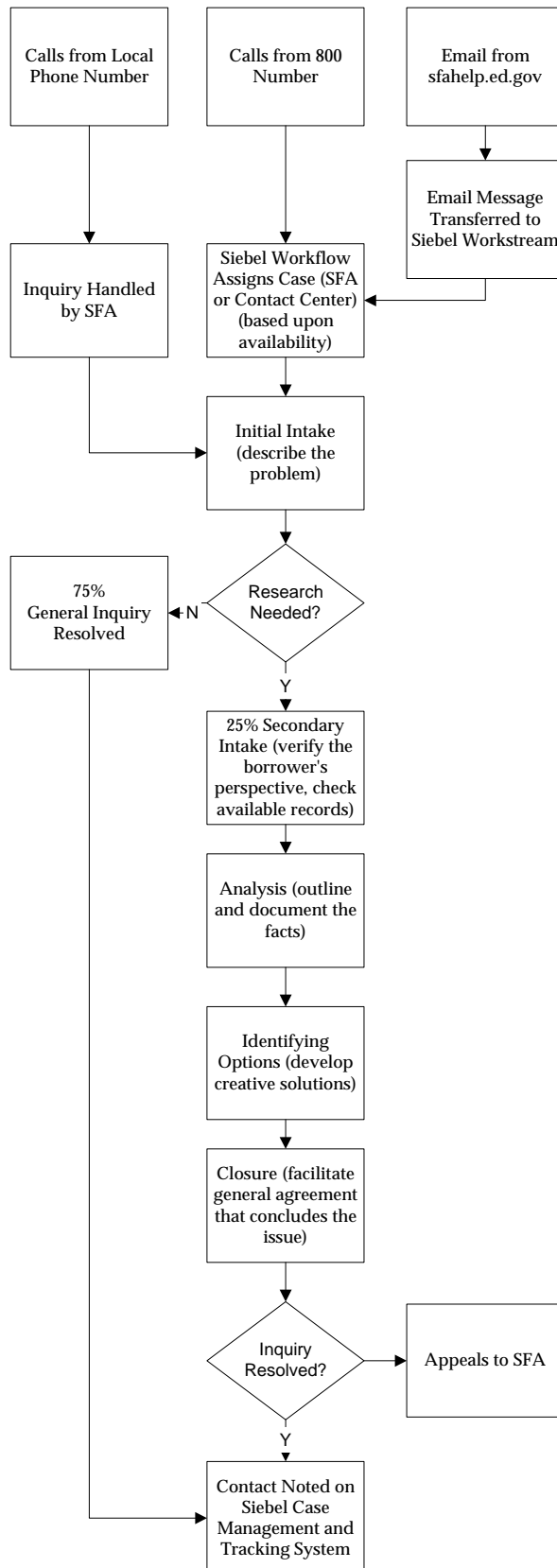
The 800 phone number calls and emails from web site are assigned to case representatives through Siebel workflow. The assignments are based on midpoint/highpoint availability. The SFA Ombudsman staff handles the local calls.

The problem is determined during the initial intake. What has been done previously and the borrower's expectations are clarified. The borrower's information is captured and the complexity of the call is determined. Approximately, 75% of the inquiries are general and can be resolved during the first call. The other 25% must be researched.

The problem is mediated during the secondary intake, analysis, and identifying options phases. The secondary intake verifies the problem and checks other available records. Sources utilized include NSLDS, DMCS, PEPS, Lender, Servicer, Guaranty Agencies, Collection Agency, Other SFA Offices, IFAP, etc. Analysis verifies, outlines, and documents the facts including customer expectations and potential for common ground among parties involved. The Ombudsman caseworker brainstorms alternatives, reviews similar case resolutions, and works with SFA offices and external groups to identify options for resolution.

The Ombudsman caseworker creates a general agreement to bring a case to closure. The agreement concludes the issue and deters the customer from having problems with the same issue again. The agreement states action times, responsible parties, and timeframes. The case is tracked in the Siebel Case Management and Tracking System.

Ombudsman Process Flow

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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Calls from Local│     │ Calls from 800  │     │ Email from      │
│ Phone Number    │     │ Number          │     │ sfahelp.ed.gov  │
└────────┬────────┘     └────────┬────────┘     └────────┬────────┘
         │                       │                       │
         │                       │                       ▼
         │                       │              ┌─────────────────┐
         │                       │              │ Email Message   │
         │                       │              │ Transferred to  │
         │                       │              │ Siebel Workstream│
         │                       │              └────────┬────────┘
         ▼                       ▼                       │
┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐              │
│ Inquiry Handled │     │ Siebel Workflow │              │
│ by SFA          │     │ Assigns Case(SFA│◄─────────────┘
│                 │     │ or Contact Cntr)│
│                 │     │ (based upon     │
│                 │     │ availability)   │
└────────┬────────┘     └────────┬────────┘
         │                       │
         │                       ▼
         │              ┌─────────────────┐
         │              │ Initial Intake  │
         └─────────────►│ (describe the   │
                        │ problem)        │
                        └────────┬────────┘
                                 │
                                 ▼
┌─────────────────┐         ◇─────────◇
│ 75%             │      N  ╱ Research  ╲
│ General Inquiry │◄───────  ╲ Needed? ╱
│ Resolved        │          ◇─────────◇
└────────┬────────┘              │ Y
         │                       ▼
         │              ┌─────────────────┐
         │              │ 25% Secondary   │
         │              │ Intake (verify  │
         │              │ the borrower's  │
         │              │ perspective,chk │
         │              │ available recds)│
         │              └────────┬────────┘
         │                       ▼
         │              ┌─────────────────┐
         │              │ Analysis(outline│
         │              │ and document the│
         │              │ facts)          │
         │              └────────┬────────┘
         │                       ▼
         │              ┌─────────────────┐
         │              │ Identifying     │
         │              │ Options (develop│
         │              │ creative soln)  │
         │              └────────┬────────┘
         │                       ▼
         │              ┌─────────────────┐
         │              │ Closure(facilit.│
         │              │ general agreement│
         │              │ that concludes  │
         │              │ the issue)      │
         │              └────────┬────────┘
         │                       ▼
         │                   ◇─────────◇      ┌─────────────┐
         │                  ╱ Inquiry   ╲────►│ Appeals to  │
         │                   ╲Resolved? ╱     │ SFA         │
         │                   ◇─────────◇      └─────────────┘
         │                       │ Y
         │                       ▼
         │              ┌─────────────────┐
         │              │ Contact Noted on│
         └─────────────►│ Siebel Case     │
                        │ Management and  │
                        │ Tracking System │
                        └─────────────────┘
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Information Sources:

Common Data Used
- General Borrower Information
- Borrower Contact History
- School Contact History
- Loan Information and History
- Issue Resolution Field

Common Data Sources
- NSLDS, most complete picture of students loan history
- PEPS, school information
- DMCS
- DLSS
- LCS
- LO
- Pell
- FFEL
- Closed School Information
- IFAP
- Dear Colleague Letters on CDs
- Siebel Case Management and Tracking System

Data Analysis Tools:
- Siebel Case Management and Tracking System

Volumes (10/99 to 08/17/01):
- Cumulative Total all Cases: 19,978 (100%)
- Cumulative Total for General Assistance: 14,462 (72%)
- Cumulative Total for Research: 5,516 (28%)
- Open Cases (of Cum Research): 594 (11%)
- Closed Cases (of Cum Research): 4,922 (89%)
- Web Site Hits Cumulative: 127,813

Key Performance Indicators/Measurements:
- Surveys
- Web site comments and suggestions
- Number of cases resolved successfully
- Time needed to resolved cases
- The usefulness and quality of data
- Ability to recommend solutions that are fair for all parties
- Ability to recommend productive systemic change, program improvements

Current Issues/GAPs:
- General inquiry contacts are 70-80% of the total Ombudsman Contacts
- Escalation process needs to be redefined to allow only last resort cases to be handled by Ombudsman

- Ombudsman needs access to all customer history to efficiently and effectively mediate borrower issues
- Not having the Ombudsman Case Management and Tracking System Architecture web based is cumbersome and limiting

Future Goals and Objectives:
- Truly serve as the last resort for issues after all other customer service avenues have been exhausted
- Analyze Ombudsman cases to push out prevention information to the enterprise
- IVR
    - Short Term: Inform borrowers to contact other sources first
    - Long Term: Agree with single number for Student concept, push contacts to the appropriate audience first to significantly reduce general inquiries
- Contact history captured and shared across the enterprise
- Siebel text fields in version 1999 are set to 8 kilobytes (with overhead this equates to maximum of three pages of typed text. The Ombudsman Office has expanded the text size to 16 kilobytes to accommodate 7 – 8 pages of typed text. Future versions of Siebel software should be analyzed to determine of expansion of the character input table data size needs to be increased to 16 kilobytes (at a minimum) to permit at least 7 – 8 pages of typed contact with a customer, or whether table size already exists at 16 kilobytes

Employee Information:

SFA Ombudsman Employees
20 (confirm)

Internal Office Ombudsman Liaisons
- Collections
    - Chicago - 6 with access to Case Management and Tracking System
    - Other Regions – 1 research
- Loan Consolidation
    - DC – 2 with access to Case Management and Tracking System
    - Montgomery – 2 research
    - Louisville – 2 research
- Loan Servicing
    - Utica – 1 with access to Case Management and Tracking System

Other:
- Web site content management is supported by CSC through CIO

Related Projects:
- eServicing, the majority of the Account Balance questions could be pushed to the Loan Servicing Contact Center

Sources Utilized for Operating Model:
- Ombudsman Case Process
- Open Research Problem Cases by Original Issue Matrix, 08/17/01

- Request for Organizational Approval Document
- Servicing Students – The OSFA Ombudsman
- SFA Ombudsman Activity Report Cumulative Totals, October 1999 to Date
- SFA Management Interviews